
Blighted Property Review Committee

Thursday, May 21, 2009

Meeting Report

Committee Members Attending: M. Wolfe, M. Candelario, D. Luckey, W. Bealer

Others Attending: L. Kelleher, J. Kromer

Ms. Kelleher announced that Mr. Olsen was detained at work and was unable to attend. Ms. Kelleher asked Mr. Luckey to chair the meeting.

Mr. Luckey called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. He announced that a quorum was present. Ms. Kelleher stated that no one from the Administration contacted her indicating that they were not attending.

Public Comment

No one offered public comment.

Agenda and Minutes

Mr. Luckey asked the Committee to review the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the April meeting.

Mr. Bealer stated that the Properties of Merit boundaries may need some adjustment.

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to approve the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the April meeting.

Mr. Luckey noted his discussions with Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Adam Mukerji seeking his assistance with handling the properties taken through eminent domain. Mr. Bealer expressed the belief that the properties taken through eminent domain will be few and the majority of the properties at this point will either enter into a rehabilitation program or will enter into demolition agreements.

The group noted the need to define a plan to take ownership of the vacated lot at 155 Walnut Street. The original property owner has retained title to this lot, which has been lienied for the demolition costs. The group also discussed the time constraints of the blighted property process.

Mr. Kromer provided an update on his study of the City's housing stock. He stated that he is currently working to develop an education and training program for the Property Maintenance Inspectors. He stated that a memorandum containing timelines will be presented to the Codes Division in the near future. He also noted the need for improved public education on the codes and housing processes. He stated that he is pleased with the BPRC's great progress.

Hearing Procedures

The group reviewed the hearing procedures drafted in 2007. Mr. Bealer noted that these procedures seem to be unnecessarily based on zoning hearing procedures.

Ms. Kelleher stated that the procedures repeatedly use the term "applicant". She noted that in the blighted property process there are no applicants. Those involved in the blighted property process are not applying, but are drawn into the process by the BPRC. She stated that property owners involved have the opportunity to appeal, not to apply. She also noted that the timelines in the draft procedures do not match those in the ordinance or in the bylaws.

Ms. Kelleher was asked to correct the hearing procedures. Ms. Kelleher stated that she will contact Karen Beck-Pooley, Executive Director of the Allentown Redevelopment Authority to inquire about the hearing procedures used by Allentown.

POM Areas

Ms. Kelleher stated that everything has been arranged for the POM kick-off meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 28th from 7-9 p.m. at the Sovereign Performing Arts Center. POM was supplied with the guest list used for City affairs by the Council Office.

Update on Target Properties

Mr. Luckey asked that the Committee review all properties on the target list and determine if they should be retained, watched or dropped. As City staff was not present, the group relied on the information Mr. Bealer received from his meetings with Mr. Mayes and Mr. Wright.

Retain the property on the Target List

- **212 South 8th Street (Penn Optical Bldg)** - Ms. Kelleher noted that the City is considering adding this property to the expanded KOZ.
- **317 Schuylkill Avenue**
- **118 Elm Street**
- **343 McKnight Street**
- **360 McKnight Street**
- **157 Walnut Street**
- **210 North Front Street**
- **228 North 2nd Street**
- **127 North 2nd Street**
- **153 North 2nd Street**

Continue to watch and follow-up

- **530-532 Penn Street** - Ms. Kelleher stated that last month, Ms. Mayfield stated that this property was in litigation. She noted that the litigation began in 2003. Last month the group agreed to monitor the property for the next 45-60 days. If no change in the status of the litigation occurs by the June meeting, a Determination Hearing Letter will be issued.
- **301 Buttonwood Street** - this property is located at the corner of North 3rd and Buttonwood. Ms. Kelleher suggested that the BPRC members drive by this property to assess its condition.
- **644 North Front** - rehab is underway.
- **628 North Front** - Mr. Franco is seeking a demolition agreement.
- **217 North 2nd Street** - under contract with a realtor.
- **363 North 2nd Street** - property has pulled rehab permits.
- **129 North 2nd Street**
- **153 Walnut Street** – owner claims rehab work underway; however, little progress has been noted over the past 6 months.

Drop

- **15 North 5th Street** - Mr. Bealer stated that Mr. Franco reported that he has worked out a rehab arrangement with the owner. It was also reported that as the property was purchased at tax sale, there is a problem with the title. It was decided to drop this property from the target list. Ms. Kelleher will refer the building to the Historic Preservation Specialist.
- **431-437 Penn Street** - Mr. Bealer stated that Mr. Franco reported that this property does not have any maintenance or structural issues. Mr. Franco requested that these properties be removed from the list. The group agreed.
- **200 N Front Street** - this property has been purchased by Our City Reading.

Other Business

Mr. Bealer stated that the Planning Commission reappointed him as their representative on the BPRC.

Mr. Candelario stated that the BPRC should not shy away from larger corporate/manufacturing buildings. He noted the importance of re-energizing all vacant and dilapidated buildings.

Mr. Candelario stated that as Chair of the Education Committee, he would like to prepare a pamphlet covering the BPRC process.

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Ms. Wolfe, to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk

FOLLOW UP ISSUES

- Review Amended Hearing Procedures, be prepared to discuss and approve at June meeting
- Update on Target Properties
 - Letter of Determination to 530-532 Penn Street
 - Progress report on rehab of 155 Walnut
- Ability of the BPRC to enter into partnership agreements (M. Mayfield)
- Report - Research Federal & State Urban Development Law and compare to local enabling ordinance – C. Younger
- Committee Reports